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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses some theoretical implications regarding the concept of spirituality and offers some practical suggestions for including spiritual health in the health education program. A traditionally accepted model of health (Hettler, 1979), the six dimensions of wellness are the intellectual, emotional, physical, social, occupational, and spiritual dimensions. In this model, spiritual health is considered as one of six equally important dimensions of wellness. A contrasting view, however, is that spiritual health is the source of all the other dimensions, and that spirituality is the over-arching umbrella covering all of the other aspects of health, representing the essence of who and what the individual is. An activity is outlined that provides students with an opportunity to discuss thoughts about spirituality as presented by a variety of authors. An individual's selection of a quotation is assumed to be guided by a personal understanding and view of spirituality. The quotation is read within the group and each student expresses an interpretation of the meaning and implications for spiritual health. The activity culminates with guided discussion by the entire group. The 14 quotations, and their sources, are appended along with 5 transparency masters. (JD)

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Spiritual Health: A Balance of All Dimensions

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Allen and Yarian (1981) provided a comprehensive model for a theoretical conceptualization of health. They looked at the exogenous and endogenous factors that contribute to holistic health. They discussed the need for a balance among the elements of holistic health and suggested that an elemental weakness existed in the area of spiritual health. Nine years later we continue to struggle with the allusiveness of "spiritual health".

Today we continue to place a greater emphasis on the elements that we can easily define and with which we feel most comfortable. After all, there are disciplines that focus on elements of the mind, e.g. psychology, and the body, e.g. exercise science and medicine. There are no commonly accepted disciplines for spiritual health. If spiritual health takes on a religious connotation (Eastern or Western), it becomes too controversial to address in the schools. Thus, fear keeps some health educators from addressing this dimension. For others, spiritual health is perceived as "intangible" and undefined and, therefore, "unteachable". The assumption is that spiritual health just happens when we take care of the body and the mind.

In this session, Dr. Chandler and I will address some theoretical implications regarding the concept of "spiritualality" and offer some practical suggestions for implementing spiritual health into the health education classroom. A traditionally accepted model of health is the "six dimensions of wellness" presented by Hettler (1979): intellectual, emotional, physical, social, occupational, and spiritual.

In this model, spiritual health is considered one of six equal parts of wellness. However, we believe that spiritual health is more than just one part of wellness. Spiritual health is the source from which all of the other dimensions arise (transparency 1, Spirituality and health). This transparency

offers a view of where we might place all dimensions of health. The umbrella is "spirituality". This is the essence of who and what we are. It is not "a part" of us, it is us. Spirituality draws people together and defines our "oneness" or "alikeness". Alienation and separation are created when individuals feel a need to define the self as separate from others.

There is a saying in spirituality that goes, "When the student is ready, the master appears." That is exactly what happened to me last week as I started to make final preparations for this session. Two events were significant in clarifying the direction and implications of this presentation.

The first event served to remind me that we are all on a path of increasing awareness (higher consciousness). While putting this presentation together, I was dealing with a lot of self doubt, that is, "How can I address a topical area that many 'masters' in our field have been discussing for some time? How can I have anything to contribute?" But, while talking to one of my students, I made a comment about my anxiety regarding this presentation. She asked me, "Are you afraid you might bomb?" And I replied "I certainly am." She asked me, "Have you ever bombed before?" And I replied, "No, that has never happened. In the past, most of my presentations have been well received." She suggested that I might want to go into the classroom that day and practice "bombing" so that I could walk back out of the classroom and feel okay and recognize that I was the same person before and after the experience.

What a wonderful insight! Here I was, preparing a discussion of letting go of fear, of developing inner peace, confidence, and consciousness, and this student provided a revelation regarding my own fears and offered suggestions on how to dissipate them. I smiled, thanked her very much for her wisdom and for being my teacher that day. I smiled for the rest of the day, knowing that

the anxiety no longer existed since the fear had disappeared. I had created the fear and anxiety in my mind. I could let go of the fear and anxiety by creating a new, positive thought.

The second teaching occurred the next day. While struggling to address the issue of why and how possible fear and reluctance about teaching spiritual health may occur, the issues of fundamentalist Western religion continued to surface. How can the concepts of "spirituality" be demystified? How can these concepts be introduced in a practical, non-threatening manner in the classroom? Again, a student provided a succinct description of what needs to be conveyed. In essence, she said, people need to understand that spirit is something that everyone already has; it isn't something we acquire. Spirituality isn't indoctrination of another set of values but rather a method or way to release the spirit within the individual. It is something we all share, a oneness, a connectedness. Western religion, on the other hand, is a political organization of like-mindedness and values. It separates one group from another. Fear and protectiveness occur when the boundaries of the church are threatened. As far as spirituality goes, why should people be afraid of something they already possess?

Changing the perceptual view of life. Now the questions become: How do we teach people to tap into their own internal powers? How do we teach them to get in touch with the spirit within? Many of us in this room have used the experiential activity of a timeline to teach students to look at the significant life events in their past. Once they have recorded those events, they reflect on the meaning of the events to their current outlook on life, how their thinking was shaped by these events, how their feelings were shaped by these events. This activity tends to focus on the impact of external

events on our internal programming. The timeline is horizontal in nature and provides a unidirectional view of life - everything is fixed in time and eventually we die as life is directed by the events we experience. This simple activity can be modified to help students learn to tap into their internal powers. Instead of viewing life horizontally, it can be viewed as a circle. The spiritual perspective acknowledges that everything we need for happiness, inner peace, and contentment already exists within us. It is the core of our existence. This inner core is all knowledge, all being, all consciousness, all happiness. Students write words to describe their inner core at the center of the circle. As we go through life, we create external components and events (money, power, prestige) that are intended to provide happiness and security. "If I could just win the lottery, I'd be happy." "If I could just be the department chair, I'd be happy." "If I just get tenure, I'd be happy." "If my lover would just come back, I'd be happy." While these events may contribute to our happiness or security, they cannot be our happiness. Happiness is initiated from the internal powers we possess, not external rewards. Students are asked to fill in the outer circle with external components and events that they perceive as impacting their inner peace. Some of these components are closer to the center of our being; others are on the periphery.

All life events which are percieved to impact the true essence of our existence and have the greatest personal meaning are placed closer to the center of the circle where the core of our existence lies. Those events with less personal significance are placed in the outer realms of the circle. Students learn to recognize how their programming determines how they perceive external events, how the events were shaped by their thinking, and how the

events were shaped by their feelings.

All external components serve to create addictions and fears; all serve to move us further from the true source of internal peace and happiness. Spirituality moves us back to the core of our existence, to the center of our happiness. The periphery becomes less significant. We move toward a balance of mind, body, and spirit. We move toward a harmony of intellectual, social, occupational, physical, and emotional wellness.

Exploring concepts and thoughts about spirituality. The following activity provides students with an opportunity to discuss the concepts and thoughts about spirituality as presented by a variety of authors. Each group of three to five students receive several index cards with quotations. Dr. Chandler and I have selected quotations from the list of authors provided in the bibliography (see attached list of quotations). Your selection of material will be guided by your own understanding and view of spirituality. The quotation is read within the group and each student expresses his/her interpretation of the meaning and implications for spiritual health. The activity culminates with guided discussion by the entire group.

A lot of attention has been paid to an external focus on the various wellness dimensions. An example of an external focus is setting external behavioral goals for achievement and external reinforcers or rewards. It is a reliance on something outside of oneself for motivation and evaluation. Spiritual health signifies that wellness has an internal as well as an external focus. Spiritual health involves the internal focus of the other five dimensions of wellness. It is similar to the concept of uncontaminated free will. For example, "I am doing this because it is personally meaningful to me, because I believe it is best for me, because I want to." Optimum

health can be successfully achieved and maintained with a balanced attention to both 1) external goal-setting and reinforcement and to 2) internal motivators with personal meaningfulness.

Comparatively speaking, not as much attention has been paid to the internal or spiritual focus of wellness. The current trend increases the emphasis on the spiritual or internal focus of wellness. We are contributing to this trend by encouraging health educators to teach practical applications for the internal focus on wellness. An example of an internal focus is to create and to practice personal affirmations or internal responses to keep the mind congruent with an ideal and to motivate via internal means. To practice, one holds the affirmation in one's mind and mentally repeats it. With practice, these affirmations become internalized beliefs. These will serve as personally meaningful internal motivators for behavior.

Internal responses or beliefs are positive and I focused (transparency 2, Guidelines for developing internal responses). The basic premise of spiritual health is: what I am doing today brings harmony and balance into my life. Spiritual health does not validate the "I am not enough" self image. It supports the belief that I have the power to give to myself right now to practice a personally meaningful life. The more I give to myself, the more fulfilled I am. If I feel incomplete, it is because I am not attending to an important element in one of the dimensions of wellness in a positive and personally meaningful way.

Internal responses or beliefs are here-and-now focused. They focus only on the present. If I take care of today in a positive and productive way - then tomorrow becomes irrelevant. If I focus on achieving present contentment then each of my todays is more fulfilled. I live a series of more healthy and

more fulfilling todays. Success is present-oriented. Failure is future oriented. Focusing on the future lends credibility to the potentiality or fear of failure, i.e., "What if I can't achieve?" Focusing on the present, on what practical thing I can attend to at this moment, recognizes each moment-by-moment success.

By attending to the now-focused internal or spiritual dimension of each area of wellness we enjoy the process of living, doing, and being. Life is not a struggle or a contest. There are no winners or losers. There are no superior or inferior beings. There is the process of participation and personal effort and attainment.

Internal responses are practical. They are non-competitive, non-power seeking over others, and non-fear supporting. The focus of internal motivation is personal growth, internal harmony, serenity seeking, self-love, other-love, self-confidence, self-competence, and fulfillment. Practical applications of the spiritual dimension, such as creating and practicing internal responses for each area of wellness, can demystify the concept of spirituality (transparencies 3-5, Internal responses for each area of wellness). These transparencies provide a sample of the questions we may ask ourselves and suggest internal responses as we explore each dimension of wellness. The mind, body, and spirit can work in unison recognizing each other equally to maintain a healthy balance. They do not have to compete with or discount one another. They benefit from one another by working together.

We hope that this session has provided you with some practical suggestions for increasing students' awareness of the spiritual dimension of wellness. The balancing of internal and external components of wellness is extremely important in health education. The spiritual dimension serves as a guide for

drawing us together, for recognizing our oneness and alikeness rather than our separateness and differences. As we tap into our creative personal powers, our focus becomes a commitment to helping others. World balance is achieved as all people move toward internal harmony and peace. Our internal interrelationship and interdependence with others becomes balanced regardless of our perceived external differences in color, sex, and status. We recognize that we are ONE.

SPIRITUAL WELLNESS QUOTES

To resist those parts of ourselves that we dislike is to give power to those parts...rather we need to focus on positive elements (not resist negative aspects) and build self esteem through this method.

Sonia Johnson

Wildfire

We need to trust our intuitive self about the power within...that a new or better self can be created through thought processes...that the core should be a basic trust in one's self.

Sonia Johnson

Wildfire

"...Life is potentially meaningful under any conditions, even those which are most miserable...This presupposes the human capacity to creatively turn life's negative aspects into something positive or constructive." (p. 162)

Viktor Frankl

Man's Search for Meaning

Tragic optimism is "optimism in the face of tragedy and in view of the human potential which at its best always allows for: (1) turning suffering into human achievement and accomplishment; (2) deriving from guilt the opportunity to change oneself for the better; and (3) deriving from life's transitoriness an incentive to take responsible action." (p. 162)

Viktor Frankl

Man's Search for Meaning

"A human being is not one in pursuit of happiness but rather in search of a reason to become happy, last but not least, through actualizing the potential meaning inherent and dormant in a given situation." (p. 162)

Viktor Frankl

Man's Search for Meaning

"If all the time and money that are spent to regulate one's diet were spent to regulate one's thoughts and purify one's emotions, diseases of the stomach would totally disappear!" (p. 61)

Catherine Ponder

The Healing Secret of the Ages

"When things seem inharmonious and out of order, instead of rushing about frantically trying to make them right in an outer way; instead of trying to change other people and make them more orderly (this process usually leads only to more disorder); remind yourself that lack of order first exists within you. If you can get your own thoughts and feelings orderly, then the people, situations and even the universe about you will respond in a more orderly way." (p. 149)

Catherine Ponder

The Healing Secret of the Ages

"Your problems are sometimes caused by the possesiveness and strong emotional attachment that other persons have on your life, either through their positive or negative thinking about you." (p.73)

Catherine Ponder

The Dynamic Laws of Healing

"Since the most prevalent disease is fear and identification with the mind, creative imagination can be used very effectively to dis-identify with the cares of the mind and let go into an experience of pleasure that is absorbing." (p. 154)

Joan Borysenko

Minding the Body, Mending the Mind

"It takes courage to probe and by that probing discover the deepest elements of the mind and body. It can be quite unsettling at first because many of our comfortable habits get overturned. It takes a lot of courage to let go of everything that we've been holding onto for security." (p. 64)

Joseph Goldstein

The Experience of Insight

"The level of stress is determined partly by society. Cultures that place the highest value on a combination of individualism and competition are the most stressful. Those that seem to produce the least stress and have the lowest rates of cancer are closer-knit communities in which supportive, loving relationships are the norm." (p. 73)

Bernie Siegel

Love, Medicine and Miracles

"Once accepted, beliefs and values have a powerful influence on both subjective experience and behavior." (p. 53)

Frances Vaughan

Awakening Intuition

"Absolute freedom can only be obtained through detachment from negativity. Conscious detachment is a matter of allowing negative (fear-based) thoughts and emotions to flow through your mind without affecting you." (pp. 155-156)

Dick Sutphen

Finding Your Answers Within

"If you could look at a tree with your spiritual eyes open you would see more than its trunk, limbs and foliage. You would see the fire within the earth and in the roots of the tree; you would see the fire rising up through the trunk of the tree to radiate light through all its branches and leaves, particularly in the spring of the year. The divine fire is shining not only in the sky, in the rays of the sun, but in the earth itself and in all nature." (p. 94)

White Eagle

Spiritual Unfoldment, Vol. 3

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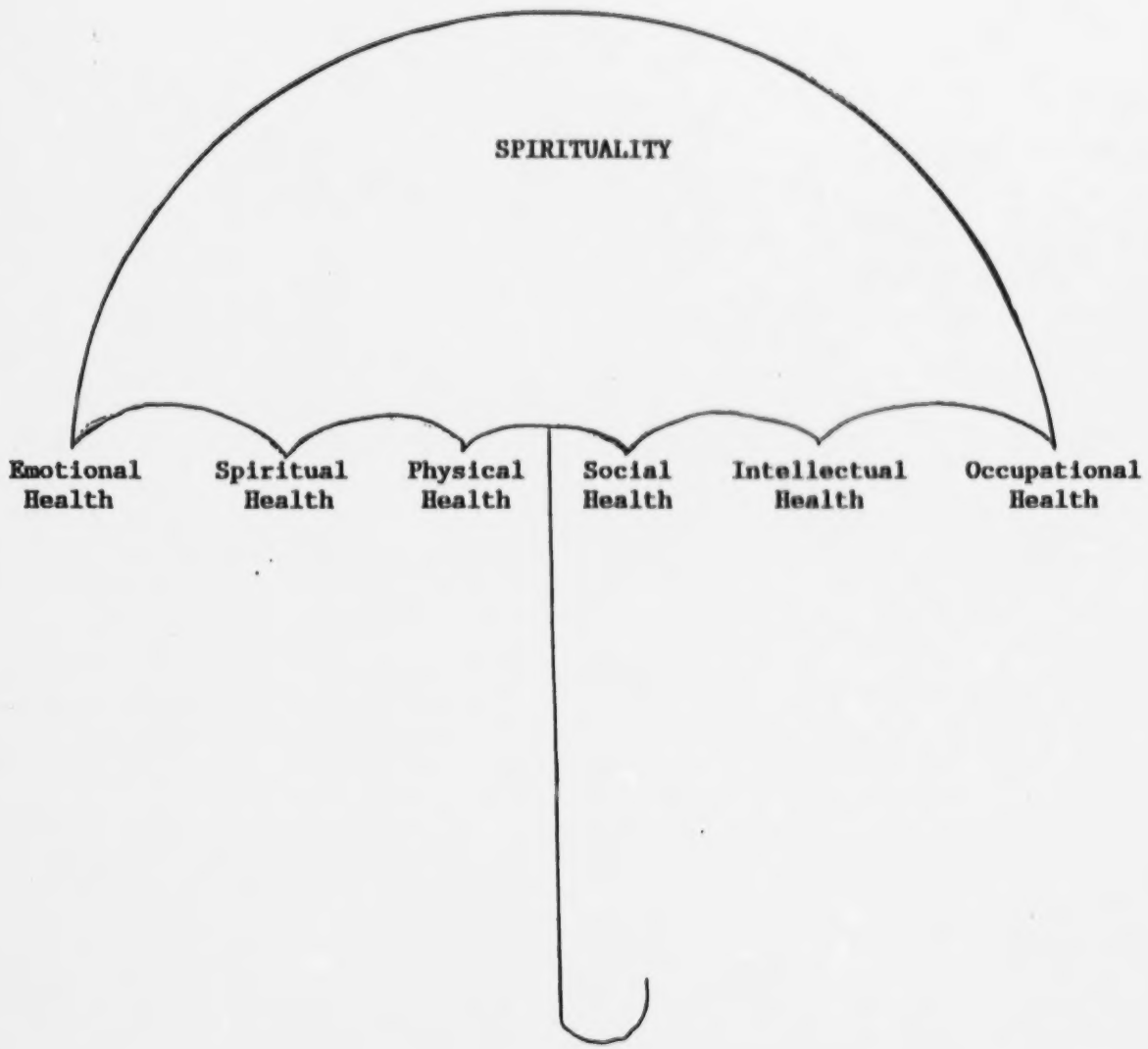
Transparency 1



Transparency 2

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING INTERNAL RESPONSES

Make the content: Positive

Here-And-Now Focused

"I" Focused

Practical

Non-competitive

Non-power seeking over others

Non-fear supporting

Internal motivation: Personal growth

Internal harmony

Serenity seeking

Self-love

Other-love

Self-confidence

Self-competence

Fulfillment

Transparency 3

PHYSICAL HEALTH

QUESTIONS WE ASK	SAMPLE INTERNAL RESPONSES
What should I eat?	I maintain a balanced diet.
How much should I eat?	I give my body what it needs.
How can I satisfy my cravings?	As I eat, I respond to my body not to my emotions.
What am I hungry for?	I enjoy nutritious foods.
How can I motivate myself to exercise?	I channel energy into motion.
How much should I exercise?	I enjoy movement; movement makes me feel good.
How can I reach my body image goals?	I visualize myself as strong and fit.
How do I change my bad habits?	I deserve a great life.

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

QUESTIONS WE ASK	SAMPLE INTERNAL RESPONSES
What do I do with my emotions?	I express my feelings.
How can I avoid denying my emotions?	I view emotional awareness as a healthy process.
How can I keep my emotions from getting out of hand?	I channel my emotions into positive behaviors.
How can I keep from being afraid or looking foolish?	I believe my feelings are valuable.

Transparency 4

SOCIAL HEALTH

QUESTIONS WE ASK	SAMPLE INTERNAL RESPONSES
How do I find a healthy relationship?	I maintain a balance between giving and receiving.
How can I keep from being hurt?	I am a survivor.
How can I keep from being lonely?	I enjoy my own company.
How do I keep from getting socially isolated?	I make an effort to get involved in the community.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

QUESTIONS WE ASK	SAMPLE INTERNAL RESPONSES
What do I have to contribute?	I have a special uniqueness.
How do I gain more prestige and power?	I am enough.
How can I afford to take risks?	I discover myself through challenges.
How do I please others?	I please myself.

Transparency 5

INTELLECTUAL HEALTH

QUESTIONS WE ASK	SAMPLE INTERNAL RESPONSES
How can I compete intellectually?	I am uniquely creative.
How do I keep from getting stagnant?	I keep my mind active and curious.
How can I be useful to others?	I am both a teacher and a student.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH

QUESTONS WE ASK	SAMPLE INTERNAL RESPONSES
How can I feel fulfilled?	I maintain a balance in each health dimension.
How do I achieve a sense of purposefulness?	I fulfill my purpose by following my heart.
How can my life seem meaningful?	I view life as a process of harmonious sharing.
When I feel incomplete, how do I find a sense of greater completeness?	I support the process of completeness through attention to each dimension of health.
Where do I belong?	I am here.
How can I feel less threatened by others?	We are all in this together; we are all one.